DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 372 529 EC 303 161

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TITLE Some Answers for Implementers to the Most Commonly Asked Questions Regarding the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in General Education.
INSTITUTION Northern Illinois Univ., De Kalb.
SPONS AGENCY Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, Springfield.; Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 41p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Change Strategies; Costs; Definitions; Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; *Educational Change; Educational Finance; Educational Policy; Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; Grading; Inservice Teacher Education; *Mainstreaming; Parent Attitudes; Parent School Relationship; Regular and Special Education Relationship; Secondary School Students; *Social Integration; Staff Development; Student Evaluation; Student Placement; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Illinois; *Inclusive Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper provides answers to commonly asked questions concerning the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education with special attention to inclusion in Illinois. Questions and answers are organized into the following sections: definitions; cost and finance; policy; roles and responsibilities; delivery of services; staff development; placement, assessment, and grading; benefits and impacts; and parents. Sample questions include: "What is inclusion?"; "What is the Regular Education Initiative?"; "How is inclusion paid for?"; "What funding patterns have worked in other states?"; "What should we do if some of our buildings are not accessible?"; "Do some aspects of inclusion require legislation?"; "What are the inclusion issues with teacher unions?"; "What are the the characteristics of a general education teacher who would be effective at including students with disabilities?"; "What are the effective general education instructional strategies which facilitate inclusion?"; "What transportation needs are created by inclusion?"; "What kind of training and inservices are available and needed for special education staff?"; "How will students with disabilities be graded in an inclusive setting?"; "What is the impact of inclusion on general education students?"; and "What if a parent of a child eligible for special education services doesn't want inclusion?" Contains 24 references. (DB)

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ED 372 529

Some Answers for Implementers to the Most Commonly Asked Questions Regarding the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in General Education

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This manuscript was developed in part by the Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities grant, "Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Severe Disabilities: Technical Assistance Project" with support from Project CHOICES, an initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education. Opinions expressed in this manuscript do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of either agency and no official endorsement by those offices should be inferred.

EC 303161

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The questions about inclusion of children with disabilities in general education for which we have developed some answers are those that have been asked by parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, other school personnel and community members throughout the state of Illinois. The Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities (IPCDD) has sponsored informational meetings that have become known as the "road shows." At each "road show," the questions asked were recorded and some answers appear here. Additionally, educational consultants with Project CHOICES and staff from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provided us with questions also.

Finally, we would like to thank all the general and special educators and families throughout the state of Illinois who are providing us with the answers. Brave families and risk taking educators will lead the way. If any of you find answers of which we are not aware, please find a way to share them.

Regards,

Sharon Freagon

Sharon Freagon for the Authors

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DEFINITIONS

What is inclusion?

Inclusion involves placement in the home school and in the general education environments(s) with appropriate supports, aid(e)s, and curricular adaptations designed individually for each student eligible for special education services. Inclusion most closely follows the wording and intent of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requiring each public agency to insure,

> ...that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who do not have a disability, and special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environments occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Section 612)

Another term for inclusion is supported education meaning one educational system for all students. Successful schools regard all students as rightful members of the school they would attend, and the class(es) in which they would participate if they did not have disabilities. Each student is provided instructional curricula to meet their individual needs and learning styles.

Experience tells us that where inclusion is successful there are no prerequisites for participation. Standards vary with each child and all educational staff share responsibility.

What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?

This term appears in the language of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) formerly known as The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142). This term known as LRE applies to the placement of special education eligible students in the educational environment which least restricts their interactions with students not identified as eligible. For most students, this would be an age-appropriate classroom in the school (s)he would attend if not identified as eligible for special education. Moving to a more restrictive placement can only be done where there is documentation that the student's needs cannot be met in the regular classroom with necessary aids and supports.

What is the Regular Education Initiative (REI)?

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) was first referenced by Madeline Will, former U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) Director when President Reagan was in office. Often called REI, this term refers to the unification of what has become two separate educational systems --regular and special education. REI efforts generally take two forms. First, for students not yet identified as eligible for special education, pre-referral intervention strategies are used in the regular classroom to avoid a referral to special education. Second, for students already identified as eligible, services are delivered in a less restrictive way utilizing such methods as collaboration, consultation and in-general-education-class, rather that pull-out resource services.

What is mainstreaming?

Mainstreaming was a term popularized after the passage of PL 94-142 which has been generally used to describe the process of placing a student with mild to moderate disabilities into one or more regular academic classes. Students who are mainstreamed are usually expected to meet the same standards as non-identified students with minor modifications in curriculum or methodology. Prerequisite skills are generally felt to be necessary since the same standards for success are being applied for all students. This delivery model identifies the child as a "special" rather than a "regular" education student. This practice has not typically been associated with students who are identified as having severe disabilities.

What is integration?

Integration involves placement out of a special education environment for part of the school day. Integration is most frequently utilized with students who have labels of moderate and severe disabilities, as these students have been typically not associated with mainstreaming efforts.

If done for academic purposes, the practice has been that the student must generally meet certain prerequisites before s/he is felt to be appropriate for integration and the regular curriculum is used. If done for social purposes, the student does not necessarily meet the same standards as required of other students. While the student may receive necessary assistance and support when integrated, a problem often occurs when the student's case manager is a special education teacher for a self-contained classroom and who must remain there with the other students. This delivery model identifies the child as a "special" rather than a "regular" education student. This practice has not typically been associated with students who are identified as having mild disabilities.

What is the home school?

The home school is the school the child or youth would attend if she/he did not have a disability, that is, the same school that brothers, sisters, neighbors and friends attend. For preschool-aged children with disabilities, the home school is the community daycare, preschool or other community environment the child would attend if (s)he did not have a disability.

What is the home school in an urban area where there are magnet schools and racial desegregation orders?

In this instance, the home school definition applies. The child or youth would attend the school she/he would attend if she/he did not have a disability. Therefore, if the parents choose a magnet school and/or if students are assigned to certain schools away from their neighborhood because of racial desegregation efforts, this would be the home school for the child or youth with a disability.

What is a cluster program?

A cluster program involves the identification of a specific school and classroom for students with a specific disability label. When cluster programs are utilized, most or all of the students do not attend their home school and students are frequently transported long distances away from their homes.

What is an age-appropriate placement?

An age-appropriate placement refers to the general education classroom for students who are the same chronological age. For preschool-aged children, age-appropriate placements are the settings in which other children of their same chronological age attend.

What are homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings?

Homogeneous groupings refers to the practice of arranging instructional groups of children and youth based on an identified label. This practice is utilized in general education when children and youth are placed in "tracks" such as "basic", "average" and "accelerated". In special education, homogeneous groups are frequently formed based on disability label. The premise

behind the use of homogeneous groupings is that children and youth who are perceived to experience the same difficulties with learning should be taught together.

Heterogeneous groupings refers to a practice of arranging instructional groups to ensure that children and youth of diverse abilities are represented in each classroom and/or activity. The premise behind the use of heterogeneous groups is that children and youth of various abilities, talents and gifts benefit from learning together, and teaching and learning from one another.

What does natural proportion mean?

The proportion of all people with disability labels in the general population is about 10 to 15%. People with the most severe disabilities represent less than 1% of the general population. When students with disability labels attend their home school, there is generally a natural proportion represented. School buildings should consider the natural proportion when assigning students to classrooms. Classrooms which consider the natural proportion will not have more than 15% of its members who have disability labels and no more than one of these students will have a label of severe disabilities.

What does an inclusive Individualized Education Program (IEP) look like?

Like the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is one of the main tenants of the IDEA. The IEP annually guides the student's team as they provide educational support and services. IEP teams that are successful at including students with varying disabilities have taught us that once students are included, the teams' visions of students broaden and become farther reaching. Expressions of these visions in the IEP reflect the supports, aids, and services needed to be successful in an inclusive classroom and school.

What are supplementary services?

"Supplementary aids and services," as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) at 20 U.S.C. 1412(5)(B), for a student to achieve educational benefit in the general education environment are supports. Supports are the accommodations made for students with disability labels in order to increase their independence and participation in general education classes. Experience working with successful inclusive classrooms tells us that supports can be as simple as the student's seating assignment in the classroom to reasonably accommodate a vision, hearing, motor, or attention need. The supports can also be as complex as an electronic augmentative communication system with trained paraprofessionals available to assist a student in all classes.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) process assists the team members to determine supports by identifying each individual student's needs. After the needs are identified, the possibilities for supports are seldom an exhaustive list. Carbon paper for a fellow student to take notes, special equipment and furniture, peer tutors (buddies), assistive technology, adapted curriculum, adapted tests and materials, individual assistants, certified staff consultants, or textbooks on audiotapes are but a few. Being creative is the key to generating, developing and implementing supports for a student's success and benefit in the educational system.

Sometimes difficult is the separating of "student supports" from "teacher supports" as most high technology or additional trained personnel; adaptations to curriculum or materials; and consultation or team teaching by staff with certain expertise, though written as specific aid(e)s for a student, inherently support and assist the teacher in providing instruction.

COST AND FINANCE

How is inclusion paid for?

The inclusion of children and youth with disabilities into regular schools and classrooms relies upon the utilization of the same funding sources as are used for more segregated categorical placements. About a year and a half ago, the Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities (IPCDD) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) jointly funded a study of how special education was financed in Illinois. In the final report titled, The Identification of Financial Disincentives to Educating Children and Youth with Moderate to Severe and Multiple Developmental Disabilities in their Home Schools, Kane, John, Bell, and Charlesworth (1993) discuss the basic economic concept of "opportunity costs." They explain that you can't spend the same dollar twice. The "opportunity cost" of the special education categorical funding system precludes the resources necessary for inclusive education. Every dollar that is spent on segregated education is one that cannot be used for an inclusive education.

Three general sources of funding for special education services exist. These are federal, state and local dollars. Well documented is that there are numerous barriers to obtaining these dollars for use in inclusive schools. In Illinois most special education funds are not directly tied to individual student services, but rather are attached to, and support the infrastructure of special education. An investigative report conducted by U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (December 13, 1993) concluded that, nation-wide, "Special education programs often operate in ways specifically designed to attract state and federal dollars to local school districts - not to best serve students" (p. 46-47). Findings from the IPCDD and ISBE study parallel those of the U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT.

What funding patterns have worked in other states?

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Study Group on Special Education (1992) identified the following five basic principles that a state should use as a basis for its system of funding special education services:

- Funding must not be triggered by the labeling of students.
- The level of funding must not depend on the placement of students or on who provides the programs.

- Funding should be oriented toward "outcomes for students" and not "inputs for programs."
- Funding for special education should be linked with funding for general education to minimize competition for dollars.
- Funding should be focused on the local school district and all special education funds should flow through the local district.

The state of Pennsylvania and Oregon have developed special education funding systems which follow the NASBE principles. Oregon's funding system is based upon increased funding for children with disabilities in its general state aid formula. In the Oregon system, however, children must still be labeled for the school district to receive additional funds. Pennsylvania's system provides extra funding to all school districts for a predetermined percentage of students in the district. The system assumes that 17% of children in a district require extra help or support and 1% require considerable support. The IPCDD and ISBE study authored by Kane, et al. (1993) estimates that if Pennsylvania's system was overlaid on Illinois, approximately 60 percent of what Illinois currently spends would be required.

The U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT cites the state of Vermont that developed a new funding formula which stopped rewarding school districts for placing students in special education. Over three years, the number of students receiving special education has been reduced by 18 percent.

How do you insure special education dollars are used for students requiring special education services?

In discussing accountability in special education, the IPCDD and ISBE study conducted by Kane, et al. (1993) identify two basic ways of holding school districts accountable for special education:

> One is the way Illinois does it now. There is a regulation for every activity. Everything must be documented. Every penny must stay in its designated channel. The assumption behind this system of accountability is that if the process is proper, the result will be good.
>
> A second way of holding school districts accountable for special education would be to directly hold the school district accountable for results, and assume that if the results are good, the process, whatever it was, was proper. The accountability would focus on results, not process. The State would focus on the quality of Individual Education Plans and whether their goals had been accomplished, and not on whether dollars had been spent for specific activities.
>
> Inclusion fits in a special education structure where the funding is attached to students and accountability is tied to results. (p.21)

The ISBE has, over the last few years, been working diligently to achieve a new accountability system for all student's learning. During its 1991 session, the Illinois legislature unanimously passed a student and school accountability measure. This new system has great promise in achieving a focus on successful learning results versus a process orientation. The Illinois Public School Accreditation Process will hold individual schools responsible. Two questions will be asked of each school in Illinois. These are: "Are all students learning?" and "Are all students served?" In this system, if a child with disabilities is placed away from his/her home school, the home school will still be responsible for accounting for that student's learning and services.

POLICY

What should we do if some of our buildings are not accessible?

Currently every school district is to complete a self-evaluation under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Part of that self-study involves physical accessibility. Under ADA, schools are required to have only one building in an area accessible for students with disabilities. However, many interpret ADA to say that by 1995, school buildings will all have to be accessible for employment reasons. To gain information about your school district, contact your school superintendent's office and ask about the self-study and the timelines to make the schools accessible.

Should the board of education have a special policy on inclusion or is it all right to assume it is embedded in the current school board mission where it refers to all?

Research tells us that organizations and individuals who have a vision are most apt to realize the outcomes of that vision. Since children with disabilities have been systematically excluded for so many years, a vision statement regarding inclusion may be of benefit in some districts for the short term. Ultimately boards of education who have a vision of inclusion for all their student populations and who value all those student populations (inclusion) will have a higher probability of achieving student's academic, citizenry and social goals. When school districts have a vision statement on inclusion, all policies should be reviewed for their compatibility with that vision statement. A district's vision should address the inclusion of all students not just those with identified disabilities. Other groups of students also feel disenfranchised, left-out and excluded.

Is Project CHOICES (Children Have Opportunities in Inclusive Community Environments and Schools) going to continue to be a viable resource for assistance with money as tight as it is?

Project CHOICES (Children Have Opportunities in Inclusive Community Environments and Schools) an initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), or some other form of staff development will most likely continue to be a resource to school districts for as long as school districts require technical assistance and support to provide educational services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. In the 1992 federal monitoring report of Illinois special education services, the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) commended Illinois for Project CHOICES. As federal discretionary dollars are used less for funding room and board costs for students placed in private residential facilities, more of these dollars will

become available for use in providing incentives to districts to provide educational services in less restrictive environments.

Additionally, the ISBE also funds the Regular Education Initiative (REI) using raw state dollars. This initiative funds school districts that are also demonstrating supports and aids in the general education environment for students with disabilities. This initiative has been most closely associated with students identified as having mild disabilities while Project CHOICES has been most closely associated with students with severe disabilities. We are learning from successful efforts by Illinois educators, however, that when a school is truly inclusive, the personnel do not draw lines on practices for students with mild or severe disabilities based on the source of funds.

Do some aspects of inclusion require legislation?

Article XIV of the School Code of Illinois parallels the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) formerly PL 94-142. In that sense, no legislative language requires changing. However, the rules and regulations (23 Illinois Administrative Code) governing Article XIV of the school code require significant change. In Illinois funding of special education is tied to self-contained classrooms, is tied to class size, is tied to the type and severity of a students disability and is tied to teacher certification. Furthermore, in Illinois, program means place which sets the whole above formula into action.

Congress' intent was clearly non-removal from the general education classroom by providing supports and aids. To have this truly individualized for students, the rules and regulations and funding formulae in Illinois will require significant modification.

Earlier, the new student and school accountability measure in Illinois was discussed. This new system should go a long way in holding schools accountable for the individual student's, with a disability, learning and needed services.

Who is advocating for change?

A number of organizations and agencies have federal goals or organizational missions which guide the activities in which they engage. The federal goals of the state councils on developmental disabilities require those state agencies to work for the integration, productivity and independence of persons of all ages with developmental disabilities. Therefore, the Illinois Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities (IPCDD) is to advise the Governor on policies and legislation regarding the integration, productivity and independence of Illinois' persons with developmental disabilities. The IPCDD also is by federal mandate to let Requests for Proposals (RFP's) to accomplish these goals in the state of Illinois.

In addition to the IPCDD, several other organizations in Illinois have as their organizational intent and bylaws the accomplishment of inclusion of persons with disabilities. Among these are the Illinois Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (IL-TASH), the Coalition on School Inclusion (COSI), Persons for Inclusive Communities (PIC) and People First of Illinois.

Finally, State Superintendent Robert Leininger, and other personnel at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) have, and continue to, advocate for change as have some appointed members of the state board. Deborah Miller, a state board member, was on the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Study Group on Special Education that produced the document Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools (1992). During Spring '93, the ISBE held hearings on a policy for including students with disabilities in their home schools. Superintendent Leininger, temporarily withdrew the policy feeling that there was still uncertainty among board members about the implications of the statement.

What are the inclusion issues with teacher unions?

Currently, experience tells us that issues related to inclusion with teacher unions in Illinois mostly center around concerns relating to supports and aids, class size, staff development and joint planning time. The inclusion of any child into a public school or class should not be negotiable. The rights of students with disabilities to access all of the services, activities, programs and classes is a civil right guaranteed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Planning time and class size should be negotiable items if in the context of all students. Where supports and aides, class size, staff development and joint planning time are an issue for an individual child with a disability, all needs should be incorporated into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of that child. This would be in a section of the IEP having to do with "other considerations."

What are the effects of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on inclusion?

Proponents of inclusion predict that the effects of the ADA on inclusion will be profound. The ADA gives significant power to the "non-discrimination on the basis of disability" aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. No public agency can deny any person with disabilities access to any of its programs, services, activities or facilities that are accessed by persons without disabilities. While the ADA requires school districts to have only one school in an area physically accessible, program accessibility is 100 percent. Persons knowledgeable about ADA are saying that even if a child with disabilities is not attending their home school because of a lack of physical accessibility, they must be included at the school they are attending. The issue of home school physical accessibility, however, is one that parents are pursuing. Those parents whose children cannot attend their home school because of a lack of physical accessibility feel that the ADA discriminates against their child in this regulation.

Is inclusion a legal mandate?

The terms inclusion, mainstreaming and integration are not mentioned specifically in federal statute. Through the years these terms have referenced state-of-the-art practices in implementing the mandate for placement in the least restrictive environment (1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act as amended by the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

The 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), now IDEA, requires that each public agency insure,

> ...that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled, and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Section 612)

With more and more examples of the successful inclusion of children and youth with severe disabilities into regular education environments with aids and supports occurring in school districts throughout the country, it is becoming difficult to rationalize the exclusion of children on the grounds of the severity of their disability.

Will inclusion be reversed down the road?

Since the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975, the state-of-the-art in special education has recognized Congress' intent to maximize the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities into less restrictive environments. While the movement toward inclusion varies greatly from state to state and district to district, recent legislation (IDEA, ADA) and case law (Oberti, 1993 & Holland, 1993) are giving clear direction to school districts that they will be held accountable for the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in regular classrooms in their home schools. The federal judge in the Oberti case said that inclusion was a right of all children, not a privileged few. Detractors point to the continuum in the law with no preference for non-removal, while recent courts have ordered inclusion with supports and aids as a civil right.

Is the goal of inclusion to get rid of special education?

The 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Part 226, defines special education as:

> ...those instructional and resource programs and related services, unique materials, physical plant adjustments, and other special education facilities described or implied in Article 14 of The School Code which, to meet the unique needs of exceptional children, modify, supplement, support, or are in place of the standard educational program of the public schools. The term includes speech pathology and vocational education.

Nowhere in the nation have we heard proponents of inclusion advocate the dissolution of special education supports and services. Rather, the goal is to eliminate the placement of students, based upon a label, into categorical programs that are segregated from regular classrooms. Such placements cannot meet the federal mandate to maximize interactions between children and youth with disabilities and their peers who are not labeled or provide equal access to curriculum content and activities. Experience of successful general and special educators tell us that roles will change, but that supports, aids, and services will most probably always be needed. The inclusion of children and youth with disabilities must be accompanied by the provision of necessary supports, aids and services.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

How much responsibility does the general education teacher have?
Who is ultimately responsible on a yearly basis for the child with a disability?
What is the role of the special education teacher in inclusive settings?
Where will special education teachers go?
How will their role change?

General and special educators who are successful in providing inclusive schooling or supported education in Illinois and throughout the nation have taught us that the practice of educating students with disabilities in general education classes in home schools requires a teaming effort between general and special educators. While each student with a disability is assigned to an age-appropriate general education class, there is also a special education teacher identified to provide support to the student in the general education classroom. The special education teacher is primarily responsible for determining, with the team, the amount and types of support and adaptations required in the general education class. The special education teacher is also responsible for monitoring the development, implementation and evaluation of the IEP.

When the determination has been made that support is needed, it may be provided by the general education teacher, by a classmate, by the special education teacher, or by related service personnel. The development of adaptations is primarily the responsibility of the special education teacher, however, the general and special education teacher and related service personnel collaborate to discuss possible adaptations. The general education teacher and related service personnel may also develop some adaptations as time allows. During class activities when support from special education personnel is not required, it is the responsibility of the general education teacher to implement the use of any needed adaptations.

The role of special education teachers and related service personnel will shift from the delivery of services in special education classes and therapy rooms to the delivery of services in general education classes and environments. Due to this shift in the delivery of services, it is critical that an inventory of the general education classes be conducted in order to determine when support is needed and to determine the most appropriate activities during which related services can be delivered.

What are the characteristics of a general education teacher who would be effective at including students with disabilities?

While we are not aware of any body of literature, as of yet, that describes the characteristics of general educators who are effective at including students with disabilities, our collective observations from working with effective Illinois educators suggest that general education teachers who are effectively educating students without disability labels can also effectively educate students with disabilities. Effective teachers frequently use innovative instructional

strategies such as cooperative learning, whole language, peer coaching, hands-on activities, integrated curriculum and learning centers. These strategies and others, which involve the active participation of students in the learning process, also facilitate the education of students with disabilities in general education. When these strategies are utilized the need for support and/or adaptations frequently decreases.

Other characteristics we have observed include flexibility, willingness to try new things, a sense of humor, and an understanding and appreciation of diversity. Due to the fact that teaming and collaboration are critical components to educating students with disabilities in general education classes, the ability to work with others, and comfort in having others in the classroom are characteristics which we believe will also prove to be beneficial.

What are the parameters and case loads for "floaters" (resource teachers and related service staff)?

Observing successful inclusive schools in Illinois lead us to believe that determining caseloads for personnel is an issue which should be dealt with on an individual district basis. Some areas for consideration in establishing caseloads include:

- amount and type of direct support needed,
- amount of consultation/collaboration needed,
- planning time for determining necessary supports and adaptations,
- time for developing adaptations, and
- distance for travel if students are geographically spread out.

What is the role of the teacher assistant?
How are teacher assistants used?

The need for a teacher assistant for support should be determined on an individual basis. Some students will need support from a teacher assistant for a portion or all of the day and some students will not need any support from a teacher assistant. If support from a teacher assistant is needed, it is most beneficial for that person to work as a classroom assistant, providing assistance to the other students in the class as well as the student with a disability. This would provide a valuable resource to the general education teacher and the other students in the class, while at the same time avoiding the possible isolation of the student(s) who has a disability. Under the direction of the special education and general education teacher, teacher assistants often implement the use of adaptations and provide assistance in the development of adaptations. Additionally, the role of teacher assistants has increasingly involved the facilitation of supports for students with disabilities from students who do not have disabilities, as well as the facilitation of friendships and relationships between students with and without disabilities.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

- ***What are the effective general education instructional strategies which facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities?***
- ***What types of supports/aids/curricular modification may be required when including students with disabilities?***
- ***How can the general education curriculum be adapted to meet the needs of the student with disabilities?***

The research of Goodlad and Lovitt (1993) and Oakes and Lipton (1990) and others has clearly demonstrated that all students learn best when instruction includes the following elements:

- active participation of the students,
- is exciting and motivating to the students,
- requires the students to think and problem solve,
- allows for the accommodation of individual learning styles,
- provides students with the opportunity to learn from, and teach one another,
- provides students with a balance of content and process,
- assists students in making "connections" with previously learned knowledge and skills,
- considers student interests, and
- involves different methods of student "output" and evaluation.

On the other hand, passive styles of instruction - such as lecture and the use of worksheets - allow for the least amount of student input, output, application, and generalization. Effective instructional strategies utilized in general education classrooms include such practices as cooperative learning, community-based instruction, teaching to multiple intelligences, class projects, learning centers, whole language, integrated curriculum, hands-on activities, computer instruction, peer coaching and the use of portfolio and other forms of authentic assessment. The use of these strategies facilitates the individualization of instruction for all learners. Experience tells that when students with disabilities are educated in classrooms where these strategies are implemented, there is less of a need to adapt and modify the curriculum.

A process known as the ecological (or environmental) inventory strategy is used to determine when supports and adaptations are needed. This relatively simple process is performed in three steps:

1. The first step is to outline the steps a person without a disability would do in order to perform the task/activity (e.g. language arts class, lining up after recess, transitioning between classes, math test).

2. The discrepancy (or performance) analysis is conducted next. This depicts what the specific child who has a disability would do in the same situation listed in step one.
3. The last step is the adaptation hypothesis or the determination of what supports and/or modifications are needed by the child with a disability in order to increase his/her participation and independence in the activity.

Supports can be provided by classmates, peers, special educators, assistants, general educators, related services personnel, job coaches, co-workers, and others. Inclusion does not mean that each child must have an individual aide at all times. Some children may need an aide for all or part of the school day while other children will be able to get sufficient supports to participate in the general education classroom by other people. The ecological inventory strategy is utilized to determine when these supports are needed. Many times, the teacher, aide, and/or related service personnel can facilitate classmates to provide the necessary supports.

General education curriculum can be adapted or modified if that is what is needed for a particular student. (Keep in mind that supports and adaptations are determined individually.) Following are some examples of strategies for adaptations and modification from successful inclusive schools in Illinois:

- Providing the student with an adapted or different set of materials (social studies readings are recorded on audio tape and content from lessons is supplemented with additional pictures, maps, etc.)
- Providing the child with an adapted or different piece of equipment (student uses a computer or some sort of typing device if handwriting is not an option).
- Changing the procedures utilized in the activity (in math activities, the student uses a calculator to check accuracy of work after completion of each problem instead of waiting until all problems are completed).
- Changing the instructional strategy utilized (using cooperative learning groups to construct mock pizzas as a way of learning fractions or using cooperative groups to learn directions (N, S, E, W) and intermediate directions (NE, SE, NW, SW) with actual maps instead of with worksheets).
- Adjusting the performance standards (student selects which 5 of the 10 problems s/he will do as time constraints prohibit completion of all - the student copies several key words to fill in the blanks of the daily journal entry rather than writing the entire entry - or the student is tested on 2 to 4 key concepts of a unit rather than the entire material contained in the unit).
- Adjusting the complexity of the content (the student engages in number recognition/number matching and writing of numerals using the same materials other students are using for multiplication of double digit numbers).
- Adapting the evaluation system (student is tested orally or through demonstration rather than written tests - or student uses formats such as true/false, matching, or short answer rather than essay).

How will team members have time for planning and collaboration?

Nationwide, successful educators are telling us that time for team planning and collaboration is critical to the success of educating students with disabilities in general education classes. Administrative support at the building and district level is important in the establishment of a system which allows for team planning and collaboration. Following are some ways that different districts have allowed for team planning time:

- Rotating substitute: The substitute rotates among teachers throughout the day to allow for each team of general and special educators to plan.
- Coordination of the "master planning schedule." In this instance, the special education teacher's planning time is coordinated with the master schedule for grade level teacher planning times. This is particularly useful in instances where special education teachers are assigned to work with specific grade levels, rather than spread across all grade levels. Planning for students with disabilities can be done during a portion of the regularly scheduled grade level planning.
- Before/after school planning: In these instances, teachers may receive compensation for planning before/after school. Compensation might include a stipend, the ability to leave early/arrive late on another day, etc.
- Early dismissal one time per month: In this instance, five minutes per class is subtracted from each class period one day per month and all students are dismissed early so that teachers have time for instructional planning. In the initial efforts to educate children with disabilities in general education a portion of this time may be identified to specifically plan for these students, however, as team members become more familiar with and skilled at determining support and adaptation needs, planning for students with disabilities may become a more "natural" part of the overall instructional planning process for all students.

Various teams have indicated that educating all students together, like any innovation, requires more time to be spent in the initial stages of implementation. As professionals gain experience and confidence in their roles, knowledge about students, and become more proficient in using strategies for making adaptations and providing supports, less planning time is required. Particularly when planning time is limited, it is often helpful for special education teachers to have copies of the lesson plans in advance.

How can the general education teacher deal with the needs of the student with challenging behavior and still deal with the other students?

Successful educators are telling us that the same effective instructional methods and strategies for adaptation and supports that are used with students who have labels of cognitive disabilities and learning disabilities are also used when students with labels of behavior disabilities are

educated in general education classrooms. In addition, the general education teacher should have the opportunity to consult on a regular basis with the special education teacher (and counselor, psychologist, social worker, etc., if the student receives these services.) The purpose of the consultation should be to discuss effective instructional strategies, specific adaptations and/or modifications as determined by the ecological inventory strategy, behavior management strategies, social interaction strategies, and so on.

There may be a need for direct support from the aforementioned service personnel regarding any of the above strategies. The direct support should be delivered in the classroom setting. In some instances, community-based instruction may be a component of the students' educational program and that instruction could be provided by one or more of the aforementioned service personnel.

- ***How will related services be provided in an inclusion school and class?***
- ***How do you insure students receive the same services with inclusion?***
- ***How do you accommodate physical adaptations in a general education setting?***

Even before the advent of inclusion, many districts were moving toward a transdisciplinary model of related services delivery. This model is often practiced in inclusive settings as well. Traditional therapy services are typically provided in a manner isolated from other therapy services and from the classroom. The focus is generally on the students' deficit skills. Transdisciplinary services are delivered with regard to the "whole" student and to the educational activities in which s/he participates.

Successful practice tells us that in a transdisciplinary model, all therapists, teachers, aides, and others who work with the student collaborate on mutual goals that are determined for that individual student and directly related to the students' educational goals. All team members train each other in their specific areas of expertise and receive training from others. In such a model, it is possible for a child's speech and language goals to be carried out all day long by each person who works with the child instead of three times a week for twenty minutes as was done in traditional therapy designs. When fully instituted, the transdisciplinary model allows for the implementation of all therapy goals throughout the school day rather than isolated sessions. Additionally, the student does not miss out on the educational activities taking place in the classroom when the transdisciplinary model is utilized.

Team members should plan to work with the child in the classroom during times that correspond to their particular areas of expertise. Speech and language therapists can be the facilitator of one of the centers in a classroom using learning centers, as this activity offers many opportunities for communication. Occupational therapists can schedule to be with the student during handwriting activities or computer activities if these are areas requiring services. Physical therapists can work with the student during natural transitions from the wheelchair to the prone stander. If transitions between activities are particularly challenging for a child with a behavior disability, the psychologist would want to be present at these times. The social worker/counselor might want

to see the student when there are opportunities to interact with other children and assist in facilitating these interactions if needed. Obviously, there are times when individual counseling may be needed. The transdisciplinary model would not preclude this from occurring.

Occasionally, concerns have arisen regarding the storage of equipment for students who need physical adaptations. While it is true that some equipment can be bulky and take up space, not all students require such equipment. When such equipment is needed by an individual child, there are considerations to be made regarding the storage of the equipment.

Since positioning should not be an activity in and of itself, students should not be positioned for just the sake of being in a different position. They should be positioned to facilitate their participation in the educational activity at hand. Therefore, if a student needs to be in a standing position for physical education, the prone stander could be stored in the equipment room of the gym. Likewise, if the kindergarten class sits on the floor for circle time, the child's corner chair could be located in that section of the room as s/he could use his/her wheelchair when the children are seated at table. If the side-lyer is the best position for the student when looking at books (and in reaching out to turn pages) then the side-lyer could be kept in the library.

What transportation needs are created by inclusion?

Actually successful districts report that many of transportation needs are solved by inclusion. In the traditional structure of special education programs, many (perhaps most) students are bused away from their home schools to schools in other neighborhoods and in other districts. When students are included in their home schools, there is much less money and time spent in transportation. Students with disabilities can ride the same buses as their peers who don't have disabilities. Most districts committed to transporting students together have found ways to schedule various bus routes to accommodate those students who need accessible transportation. In this manner, it is not necessary that every bus be accessible, but it is necessary that the children who need accessible buses be able to ride the same buses as other students in the neighborhood who attend the same school. Additionally, as students with disabilities are included in their home schools, they are choosing, and their parents are supporting their choice, to "walk" or "wheel" to school with their brothers and sisters, classmates, and friends who don't have disabilities.

Will inclusion affect services in park districts?

Inclusion in park district programs is increasingly becoming an issue for Illinois parents of children with disabilities. After becoming inclusive members of their schools, it is common for children with disabilities and their families to want to be inclusive members of their communities as well. Parents of children with disabilities, and the children themselves, often want the child

to participate in the same park district activities as classmates and friends rather than those activities conducted exclusively for people with disabilities. Some communities and park districts have made a commitment to provide support service for people with disabilities in the activities available to the general population.

- ***Will inclusion lead to the elimination of the Individualized Education Program (IEP)?***
- ***How can the IEP goals and objectives be met?***

Our experience with many successful inclusive schools in Illinois teaches us that the elimination of the IEP is absolutely not the case. IEPs are required by federal law - they will not be eliminated by inclusion. In fact, they remain as important in an inclusive setting as they would in any other setting. Many school districts, nation-wide, are heading toward IEPs for all children.

IEP goals and objectives can be met in inclusive settings. One problem associated with this is that special education has developed over time into a "place" and a "curriculum" that is different from general education. IEP goals and objectives have been developed based on the special education curriculum in the special education classroom. Our view of special education is changing to be thought of as a "service" instead of a "curriculum" and a "place." Therefore, IEP goals and objectives would be developed based on the individual student's educational needs in the educational setting (which would be the age-appropriate general education classroom). The services would pertain to the supports and adaptations the student would need to meet these goals and objectives in that setting. These services would be provided by the various team members.

Is it appropriate to deliver nursing procedures in a general education classroom? What about the needs of children who are medically fragile?

These are tough questions and ones that many educators worry about. As with many situations, "appropriateness" translates to treating the student with dignity and respect. If the child's dignity is maintained, then the "nursing" procedure may be "appropriate" for a general education classroom. Also, we may need to re-evaluate our views regarding what constitutes a "nursing" procedure. There are children who receive gastro-intestinal tube feedings in the general education classroom/lunchroom because that's when and where other children are eating. The procedure has been performed by any number of trained personnel - general or special education teachers or classrooms assistants. In such situations, the child's dignity was maintained and the other children were not in any way affected negatively. (The procedure was explained to them and they were allowed to watch and ask questions the first few times).

Obviously, there are some procedures where the individual student will need privacy, such as for catheterization. Also, some children may prefer to leave the room and go to a private place for trachea suctioning.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- ***How can I teach a student with disabilities when I have not had special education training?***
- ***How will general education teachers be trained and able to meet the needs of students with disabilities?***

The education of children with disabilities in general education classrooms requires a team effort. General education teachers frequently express concerns regarding the fact that they have not been prepared to teach children with disabilities, however, general educators who are successful at including children with disabilities have taught us that the knowledge and skills that effective teachers possess are beneficial to all children, including those who have a disability. Most general education teachers already have a diverse student population in their classroom and are making individual accommodations and adaptations. Many general education teachers utilize effective instructional strategies which involve active participation of students, students working together and learning from one another, and meaningful and motivating instructional activities. These strategies are effective for all students, including those who have a disability.

In addition to the use of effective instructional strategies, successful general education teachers know they need to obtain information and skills in individualizing instruction, adapting and modifying instruction, and working with special education support staff. While many general education teachers do in fact have the skills to educate students with disabilities, it is critical that they receive assistance from special education personnel for direct support to the student and/or adaptations to the curriculum. When special and general educators have been successful, they collaborate on a regular basis and they are able to provide each other with ongoing training. Other opportunities for training exist through ISBE initiatives such as Project CHOICES and the Regular Education Initiative (REI), International, and associated state chapters of TASH (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps) and some educational service centers (ESCs) are beginning to offer training on inclusive education. Additionally, many opportunities for training are available through workshops offered by a variety of individuals, school districts and agencies. Universities are beginning to offer coursework in consultation, collaboration and inclusion. Also, educators in Illinois have told us that when they need assistance, the first place they look is to each other and then to other districts that are implementing the desired change.

What kind of training and inservices are available and needed for special education staff?

As discussed above, opportunities for training exist through Project CHOICES and TASH (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps). There are also numerous workshops and inservices on inclusive education offered through a variety of school districts and agencies in Illinois and throughout the United States. Universities offer courses.

Some of the knowledge and skills which special education teachers feel they need to possess to be successful include:

- collaboration and consultation skills to work with general education teachers and related service personnel,
- skills involved in co-teaching,
- strategies for determining supports and adaptations,
- various ways that adaptations can be made and supports can be delivered,
- strategies for facilitating support to children with disabilities from their peers who do not have disabilities,
- strategies for facilitating friendships and interactions between children with and without disabilities,
- methods of effective instructional strategies used in general education such as cooperative learning, peer coaching, whole language, integrated curriculum, learning centers, etc., and
- methods of providing instruction in the community for children with and without disabilities.

One of the greatest adjustments that special education teachers report they need to make is becoming comfortable with the fact that they will no longer have a classroom of students. Instead, they will have a number of classrooms in which they will work. Many special educators report that they feel more like a classroom aide than a teacher. In order to avoid this, and to maximize the skills of both general and special education teachers, a co-teaching model of providing support may be utilized. This model allows general and special education personnel to have joint responsibility for designing appropriate instruction for all students in the class and joint responsibility for delivering instruction.

What are the universities doing for teacher training needs?
When are the colleges and universities going to start preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms?

The preparation of general and special education teachers has remained separate. Some universities and/or states require dual certification, but very little collaboration between the two

departments has been evidenced. Only 42% of state education agencies require general education teachers to take at least one course on working with students who have disabilities. Only 30% of states have certification requirements for general educators working with students with disabilities. The majority of teacher preparation programs in special education prepare future educators to teach in self-contained special education classrooms. Only a few general and special education programs exist in the nation that prepare teachers to work collaboratively with one another.

All educators involved with successful inclusive schooling advocate that the changing roles of both special and general educators need to be addressed at the college and university level. In order to begin to address this issue in Illinois, on March 11 and 12, 1993, a Dean's Symposium of inclusive education was held. Two representatives from each of the 12 public universities participated along with representatives from private colleges and community colleges. The State Superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education participated for the full symposium emphasizing the importance of collaboration between the public schools, the State Board and colleges of education preparing the teaching and administrators of the future. Information on inclusive education was provided followed by groups working on a vision for the preparation of both special and general education teachers and administrators. Barriers to implementing the visions were also addressed.

PLACEMENT, ASSESSMENT, AND GRADING

Should the student always be placed in the age-appropriate grade level?

Working with many IEP teams of educators, parents and related service personnel, we have found that while there may be individual circumstances to consider in making the class and grade placement of any student, the type or degree of disability should not be used to determine the grade placement of a student with a disability. Students with disabilities have historically been placed based upon their mental age or achievement levels rather than their chronological age. This was done primarily because student's were expected to meet similar standards as their peers without disabilities. The concept of inclusion does not require that students with disabilities have the prerequisite skills necessary for independently meeting grade level standards. With inclusion, supports are provided and curriculum adapted to meet the individual needs of each learner. Therefore, students should be included in age-appropriate general education classes allowing them to interact with students that are their same chronological age.

What is the ideal class size?

Early efforts to successfully include students with severe disabilities into general education classes in Illinois school districts have been accomplished in a variety of class sizes. If the appropriate supports are provided based upon the student's IEP, it appears that large class size does not have to be a barrier to the inclusion of students with disabilities. All educators and parents, however, advocate for small class sizes for the benefit of all children.

How do you deal with students who are 18-21 years old and normally out of high school?

Students determined to be eligible for special education services maintain that eligibility through age 21 or until they have graduated from high school. If parents and school personnel determine that a student should continue to receive special education services beyond the normal four years of high school, many Illinois districts are developing post high school services that are community-based and/or offered on the campus of the local community college or university. These districts maintain services without age-inappropriate placements. In cases where students may need a study hall between classes in order to do homework and therefore they will not complete all the course requirements for graduation by age 18, flexibility will be required. They may need to be at the high school for a portion of the day and in the community or community college or university the other portion of the day until age 21.

What happens to other options on the continuum?

Some opponents of inclusion in Illinois and elsewhere argue that inclusion in general education environments is just one of many points on a continuum that school districts may select for an identified student. The intent of Congress in initiating the federal mandate on least restrictive environment was clearly to give preference for placement in the regular education classroom in a student's home school. Other points on the continuum are necessary only to the degree that it is demonstrated that the needs of an individual student with disabilities cannot be met in the general education environment when appropriate supports and aids are provided. The reality is, that in many states, students are placed in segregated programs on the basis of their label with little or no consideration being given to the supports necessary to include the student in general education environments. In the U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (1993) Tom Hehir, Director of the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education is quoted as saying, "Let's bring services to kids, not kids to services as we do now" (p.60).

How many students with disabilities should be in one general education class?

The number of students with disabilities placed in a general education classroom should reflect the natural proportion of disabilities within the total school population. For example, if 10% of a district's total student population is identified as having a disability, then placements in a general education classroom of 30 students should be limited to three students with disabilities. Since people with the most significant disabilities occur in the general population less than 1 percent, there should be no more than one child with a label of severe disabilities in a general education classroom.

How will students with disabilities be graded in an inclusive setting?

Previously, when a student eligible for special education services was "mainstreamed" or "integrated" into a general education classroom, one of two grading systems was commonly used. Either the student received their grade from the special education teacher or the student received a grade using the same standards being applied to nonlabeled students in that class. Students receiving their grade from the special education teacher were considered to be earning a special education grade in much the same way as they would have had they received instruction in the self-contained special education classroom. Special education students receiving their grade from the general education teacher would need to possess the prerequisite skills necessary to meet the same standards as other students. For this reason, students with more severe disabilities have not been considered "appropriate" for mainstreaming. Inclusion, however, assumes that curriculum standards will be modified based on the needs of the learner and that assessment and grading will take into consideration these modifications.

Grading, we are finding, is one of the major concerns of general education teachers regarding inclusion. A major concern many high school teachers have with adapted grading is the perceived unfair treatment of other students. Lowering the class rank of other students and thereby jeopardizing their qualifying for college enrollment or scholarships is often of particular concern. One way some successful districts in Illinois are addressing this is to count adapted grades for honor roll, but not include them in determining class rank.

School districts are encouraged to develop guidelines on adapted grades. These guidelines should take into consideration the district's purposes for grading. Vasa in a 1980 work entitled Alternative Procedures for Grading Handicapped Students in the Secondary School presents the following common purposes for grading:

Administrative functions to:

- indicate whether a student has passed or failed,
- indicate whether a student should be promoted or not,
- indicate whether a student should graduate or not,
- be used by employers in evaluating perspective employees,
- transmit information from one school district to another,
- consolidate records of student's learning and work done so far,
- enable a course to be evaluated,
- give schools public accountability,
- provide the public with a guarantee of competence, and
- provide college admission departments with patterns of student performance.

Student functions to:

- give students a reward and sense of achievement,
- give students feedback on progress,
- motivate students,
- give students experience of competition,
- test ability to stand up to stress and pressure,
- have students experience real-life situations,
- prepare students for a stratified society, and
- test performance in real life.

Teacher functions to:

- evaluate students' progress during the course,
- assess amount of effort put in by the student,
- give feedback on teaching,
- grade in relation to other students,
- grade in relation to criteria of excellence,
- maintain standards, and
- maintain staff authority over students.

Guidance functions to:

- assist personal development of student,
- predict future performance,
- provide for screening of candidates for occupations and schools,
- stimulate students to greater efforts,
- determine the number of courses in which a student should enroll,
- decide on the advisability for enrolling in other courses,
- permit participation in school activities, play on teams, and win scholarships, and
- preserve the existing structure of society.

Parent functions to:

- give parents feedback on student progress,
- provide parents with information about appropriateness of course placement,
- provide parents with a means of evaluating the success of the IEP, and
- provide parents with information to report to their friends on the student's performance.

Cohen, in her 1982 article for the Council for Exceptional Children entitled "Assigning Report Card Grades to the Mainstreamed Child," suggests that the special education support person (inclusion facilitator) resolve the following questions with the regular classroom teacher in an effort to avoid problems which are often associated with assigning adapted grades:

- Who is responsible for assigning the report card grade?
- Should the grade be based on the discrepancy between the student's actual and potential performance or between the actual performance and grade level expectancy?
- What type of grading feedback should be given on a daily basis?
- What type of descriptive annotation will best complement the system's report card grading procedure?
- Whom should a parent contact to discuss a grade?

How will student assessment be adapted?

If instruction is to be adapted to address the identified Individualized Education Program (IEP) needs of a student with a disability, then assessment and grading must also be adapted. The general education teacher, the parents, the student and the special education support staff should review the curriculum and objectives for each class and determine appropriate student outcomes based on the IEP of the student with a disability. Outcomes for the student would then be identified and instructional strategies developed. Based on these individualized outcomes, student performance would be assessed and grades assigned. Because many important outcomes cannot be adequately measured by paper-and-pencil tests alone, one or more of the following alternative measurement strategies may need to be considered:

- Portfolios - A collection of the student's work over time that demonstrates his/her understanding of the competencies identified.
- Checklists - A criterion-based measurement system which has the instructor check the student's progress against a predetermined list of needed skills or the completion of specific tasks. Competencies can be derived from the course outline or from the student's IEP.
- Class participation and discussion.
- Class projects - Including cooperative learning activities.
- Verbal reports from students.
- Anecdotal records of student performance.
- Daily logs of student activities.
- Modified tests - Verbal, performance, shortened checklists.

In our state, we now have the Illinois Public School Accreditation Process where local schools will be required to adopt grading policies. A description of the system, the system's requirements and workbook, are available through the school improvement and student assessment office at the ISBE in Springfield. Additionally, Illinois educators are predicting that many more students with IEPs will be taking the tests of the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP). Accommodations for students' disabilities will have to be made. The IGAP is to be used only for state assessment purposes and not for grading or placement considerations. The ISBE has developed a booklet titled Understanding Your Child's IGAP Scores: A Parent/Guardian Guide to the Illinois Goal Assessment Program. Copies are available through the local schools or from the ISBE.

BENEFITS AND IMPACT

What is the impact of inclusion on general education students?

Thus far researchers in four states (Minnesota, Colorado, New York and Michigan) have looked at the impact on achievement scores of students without labels when students with disabilities are included in their classrooms. To date, no negative impacts on achievements have been reported. In Madison, Wisconsin, some achievement scores went up when students with severe intellectual disabilities were included in the schools. No relationship, however, can be inferred between achievement scores increasing and the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education environment. The reverse would also be true--if the scores went down, one could not infer the cause to be students with severe intellectual disabilities being included. Many school personnel report increased sensitivity in student to student interactions throughout the school when students with disabilities are included. Increasing numbers of students without labels make career choices based on their opportunities to go to school with students with disabilities. Finally, the future parents, teachers, employees, doctors, lawyers and legislators are now going to school with their peers who have disabilities. The world is becoming increasingly interdependent. Students who reflect the entire age group in society going to school together will have a head start on the understanding of diversity and the collaboration that will be required when they reach adulthood.

Does inclusion take away from direct instruction of other students?

If the appropriate supports, aids and modifications are provided to the student with disabilities, inclusion will not take away from the direct instruction of nonlabeled students. Experience with schools in Illinois that are successful at including students tells us that when general education teachers can see appropriate supports, aids and modifications for students with disabilities, they often relate them to services needed for other students in their classrooms who are not labeled. If the supports, aids and modifications are not present, it is possible that direct instructional time could be taken from students who are nonlabeled. Important to realize, however, is that if teachers do not use effective educational strategies, direct instructional time is taken away from all students. Experiences of many general educators is that in many instances, students who are not labeled can be just as disruptive of their classmates instruction as can students who are labeled.

How will parents react to the inclusion of students with disabilities?

Whether they be parents of a child with a disability or parents of a child not labeled, their reaction will be influenced by the appropriateness of the supports and aids provided to the child with a disability. All parents first want their children to be in a safe school environment and secondly to learn. When either of these desires are challenged, all parents have difficulty.

What are possible pitfalls of inclusion?

The most common pitfall of inclusion is not providing appropriate supports and aids. Supports and aids that are appropriate guarantee that all children in a common school setting are safe and successful. School districts in Illinois have found that when initiating inclusion, it is better to have too many supports than too few. Often educators, like employees, wait until a situation is in crisis proportion before they ask for assistance. When this happens, attitudes about the inclusion of persons with disabilities have been formed. Once supports have been provided, it is much easier to lessen them. Obtaining them is more difficult. In addition, some districts are viewing inclusion as an opportunity to reduce the cost of special education services. If this is the primary motivation, the chances for successful inclusion are greatly reduced.

Will the students who are moving from a segregated special education school into a regular school be teased and abused?

Experience tells us that this is not generally the case. Often times parents, however, especially at the high school level, worry that this may happen. Therefore, it is important to utilize strategies to alleviate this concern. One effective strategy is to invite parents of students who have been previously included to share their experiences. Another is to educate student leaders about the learning and social supports that the new students will require. Important to remember is that most students at the upper elementary, middle and high school grade levels have experienced teasing at sometime during their school years and are easily recruited to be an advocate for the student who may be perceived to be vulnerable.

What are the benefits of inclusion?

The benefits of inclusion are many and far reaching. First, students with disabilities are provided opportunities to interact on a daily basis with their same age peers who are not labeled. The exclusion of students with disabilities at an early age, we are learning, is toxic to their growth and development. Second, same age peers who are not labeled are the future parents, employers,

teachers, doctors and legislators. Their experience today with students with disabilities will significantly impact their ability to support persons with disabilities in the future. Third, when children with disabilities are included in all aspects of school life with their brothers, sisters, neighbors and friends, life is more normalized for all family members. Parents no longer have to go across town or to a different town for parent teacher conferences, school plays, games and dances. Fourth, the general education curriculum offers students with disabilities valuable educational opportunities which are not typically afforded in a special education class. Many students with disabilities have made academic achievements which far exceed those made in the special education classroom. Finally, society as a whole benefits from inclusion through the self-satisfaction of caring and the alleviation of the worry associated with belonging based on performance.

What are the downsides to inclusion?

If both students with and without disabilities do not benefit, then there is a downside to inclusion. Since inclusion is a civil right of all students according to the Oberti court case, we do not have the opportunity to exclude on that basis. Professional responsibility, then, is to develop strategies and methods where both groups benefit from, and with each others, participation.

Will inclusion serve to magnify the perceived differences between students with and without disabilities?

This question infers that differences in individuals should be minimized rather that celebrated. As a result of this common thinking, we have placed children into what adults have perceived as homogeneous groups for all sorts of play and instructional situations.

We are just beginning to see the negative effects of this grouping that is based on common characteristics. The grouping that we have done in the schools for play and instructional purposes is not evidenced in the adult world of play and work or in the interdependent nature of the world today. Therefore, our schools of the future, in order to be successful in preparing the adults of tomorrow, will have to acknowledge the interdependence and diversity of the student body including those with disabilities.

Don't students with disabilities need support from people with the same disability?

Everyone needs support from significant others in the school, in the workplace, in the home and in the community. The support that one needs is very individualized and may change depending on one's age and place in life. The fact that a student with disabilities would require support

from another person or persons with the same disability should be viewed as no different from a woman wanting the support of another woman, a man wanting the support of another man or a member of a minority group seeking support from another member of that group. Such support is commonplace in a diverse society. Schools must recognize this need and work with families to provide such opportunities at home, and in the community as well as at school. Sensitivity to the particular need of the individual student should be the focus versus grouping by disability characteristics.

PARENTS

What are some guidelines for parents of students with disabilities in getting appropriate services?

Understanding the IEP process and rationale is probably the most important suggestion for parents since their child's services are based on his/her needs as determined by the present levels of performance. Parent participation in the actual wording of the goals and objectives written for their child is equally important since the wording can determine not only how and under what conditions services are delivered but where those services are delivered. A third most important issue for parents is setting priorities. Becoming comfortable with the fact that not every activity of every day will go perfectly is helpful when making decisions such as, "What is the bottom line?", "Which things can we eliminate to get something more important?" and "What services and needs do we balance?" Parents have responsibilities as a team member as well as rights. Exercising those responsibilities is imperative to the success of the entire program for each child.

What if a parent of a child eligible for special education services doesn't want inclusion?

One of the major fears of parents is that inclusion means that their child will be "dumped" into general education without the special supports and services necessary to meet their individual needs or that services will be taken away if the "place" changes. Some families have had negative experiences when schools have "mainstreamed" or "integrated" their children with disabilities into regular education classes. In effect, some students have been "dumped" into classes without appropriate supports and aides (or without the services following the student) in the name of "mainstreaming" and/or "integration." One of the major tenants of inclusive education is that each student can receive the necessary supports and services in the regular classroom(s).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) clearly states that whenever possible, children with disabilities should be educated in the school he or she would attend if not identified as having a disability. The local school district has no legal responsibility to provide a student with a disability exposure to other "like" students with the same label(s). The local district does, however, have a legal responsibility to provide individualized special education services in the "least restrictive environment."

The IDEA also addresses the "continuum of alternative placement options" by placing the regular classroom as the starting point of the "continuum." Though a local district has a responsibility to have other more restrictive "placement options" available, parents should understand that those places may become farther and farther away from their community making it difficult for them

to participate in their child's total school life. Removing a child from their home community has serious consequences as the parents' child prepares for adult life and the home community does not know the individual.

How should parents of general education students be prepared for inclusion?

Working with successful schools, we have found that teachers' attitudes of approval seem to be the best model for positive feelings and attitudes of both parents and students. Planning "special" meetings to prepare parents for "special" children has not been necessary or desirable in most school systems. School administrators, board members, teachers and staff portraying the philosophy that "every child who lives within the geographic boundaries of this school district belongs" is what has been the most successful approach.

How do you diffuse negative feelings/concerns of parents of general education students who appear to be opposed to inclusion?

We know that acknowledging their feelings is very important. The first step is to ask the families to identify why they seem to be opposed to inclusion. Usually the fear is that a child with a disability will take up so much of the teacher's time that the other students will loose instructional time with the teacher. If the proper supports and services are in place, this, of course, will not happen. Asking the families what support they feel they need for success helps include those families as part of the solution rather than the problem.

How do general education peers and their parents react to students with disabilities being included?

The overwhelming majority of experiences in Illinois and elsewhere have been very positive. Not only have most parents and peers been very supportive, many parents have asked why this was not available long ago. Families who are involved in the general education system seem to understand instinctively the concepts of equal access, civil rights, belonging, friendships, and self-esteem. Increasingly, all families are understanding that their childrens' world is very interdependent and that they all need to learn to get along and care for one another.

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